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ACTION: POL  
INFO: AMB DCM ECON NAS CONS RSO

DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM:HARDTDB  
DRAFTED: POL:PIJUKIC  
CLEARED: POL:DBOCONNELL

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DE RUEHBH #0062 0232238  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU  
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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PREL PHUM BF EAID  
SUBJECT: BAHAMAS REMAINS COMMITTED TO DEPORTEE  
REINTEGRATION PILOT PROJECT

REF: A. 07 NASSAU 1455  
1B. 07 NASSAU 1458  
1C. 07 STATE 153189  
1D. 07 STATE 144021

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Top Bahamian government officials remain committed to implementing IOM's State Department-funded Deportee Reintegration Pilot Project, voicing no regional reservations or caveats. The Bahamian position indicates that there is no "CARICOM consensus" to decline U.S. aid on deportees. With crime now the single most important domestic political issue, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, the government is clearly unwilling to forego assistance that could help it solve practical problems and maintain law-and-order credentials. Coordination among government agencies, rather than regional sensitivities, remains the main challenge to the project's quick implementation. Post will continue to urge expeditious attention to starting the program. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) In continuing Post contacts with top Bahamian government officials, The Bahamas remains committed to implementing IOM's Deportee Reintegration Pilot Project without reservations or caveats. The Minister of National Security, Tommy Turnquest, inquired about the progress of the program during a courtesy call with the Ambassador January 11, and was assured that the U.S. was fully committed to pressing ahead. DCM noted that the 18-month implementation clock was ticking and that Post was eager to see the program begin. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brent Symonette, subsequently confirmed to DCM January 21, in response to a request for a status report, that the government would proceed with the program. Top government officials have expressed no reservations regarding regional solutions or participation of other CARICOM states, nor have they raise objections to the pursuit of bilateral solutions.

¶3. (SBU) The government continues to wrestle with its internal limitations, however, as it is still not clear who in the government will take the lead on the issue. IOM is awaiting an answer from the MFA on its letter of November 2, 2007 to conduct the initial fact-finding visit (see ref A). In a December 10 meeting, attended by WHA Bahamas Desk Officer, officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated they were unable to answer the original IOM request due to a lack of internal government coordination; whether within the MFA or among ministries was not clear. (Some Ministry of National Security (MNS) officials had at that time expressed surprise at the MFA's apparent position, indicating that they were not all on the same page.) Working-level contacts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs now confirm the government's willingness to move forward without further reference to any regional issues. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security, meanwhile,

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indicated to DCM in mid-January that she was unaware that the ball was in the Bahamian court, though she did realize that the GOCB needs to identify a clear lead to ensure it responds effectively to IOM's needs.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: With crime emerging as the single greatest domestic political issue facing The Bahamas (see ref B), the government is clearly unwilling to forego any form of practical assistance that could help it solve existing problems and meet its law enforcement obligations to an anxious citizenry. The government shows no inclination to turn away U.S. help due to nebulous concerns about regional approaches or solidarity with CARICOM on what appears to be a plain-vanilla bilateral issue. In that light, there does not seem to be a "CARICOM consensus" to decline U.S. aid on deportees. While political will is not lacking, coordination among government agencies remains a challenge to the project's quick implementation. Post is continuing to work with the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of National Security to identify a single principal point-of-contact within the government and to coordinate with IOM to ensure the initial visit occurs in the shortest possible time frame. END

COMMENT.

SIEGEL